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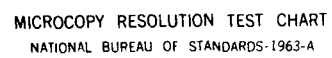
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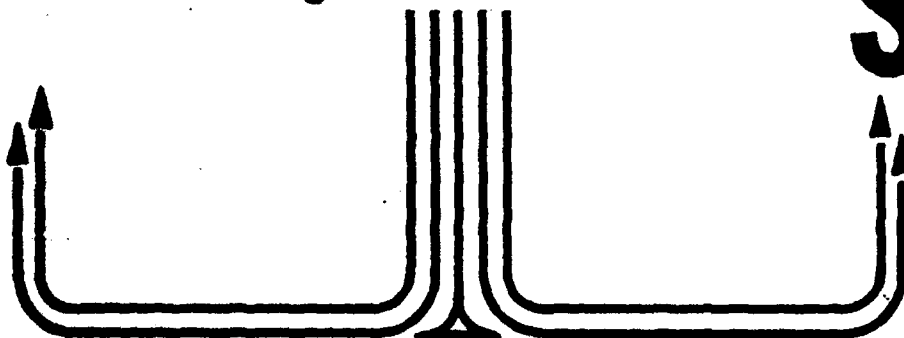
## STUDENT REPORT

A WORLD OF SECRETS: THE USES  
AND LIMITS OF INTELLIGENCE  
BY WALTER LAQUEUR--AN ANALYSIS

MAJOR ELLEN K. LEWIS 88-1580

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**REPORT NUMBER** 88-1580

**TITLE** A WORLD OF SECRETS: THE USES AND LIMITS OF INTELLIGENCE  
BY WALTER LAQUEUR--AN ANALYSIS

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Submitted to the faculty in partial fulfillment of  
requirements for graduation.

**AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE**  
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## — PREFACE —

For an avid reader, the opportunity to satisfy the Air Command and Staff College research requirement with a book analysis and the publication of the Air Force Intelligence and War Core Reading List were a fortunate coincidence. The Air Force Intelligence and War Program, much like Project WARRIOR, emphasizes reading and study as an essential ingredient in the mastery of one's profession. The Core Reading List is intended as a starting point. A World of Secrets: The Uses and Limits of Intelligence by Walter Laqueur is one of ten books making up the list. Its particular appeal as the basis for a detailed evaluation was the author's focus on intelligence analysis; a refinement of topic which happens to coincide with my own prejudice against covert action and counterintelligence as genuine intelligence activities.

The 1970s and 1980s have witnessed a flood of articles and books on every aspect of intelligence. As a practical matter, it was necessary to limit the scope of research associated with the book analysis simply in order to define a manageable project. The books selected for the Intelligence and War Core Reading List were intended to reflect the current broad debate about the role of intelligence; all ten books have been published since 1980. Taking a cue from those selections, my research was arbitrarily limited, with two exceptions, to material published from 1980 onward.

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## —ABOUT THE AUTHOR—

Major Ellen K. Lewis is a career Air Force intelligence officer who has held a broad range of assignments during her fifteen years in the Air Force. She entered the Air Force in 1973 through the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Program after completing a BA in Geography and Economics from the University of Pittsburgh. Following the Air Intelligence Officer Course in 1973, she was assigned to the 432 Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, Udorn RTAB, Thailand. Following that assignment, she began a long and varied association with Air Force Special Operations Forces, first with the 1 Special Operations Wing, Hurlburt Field, FL, from which she was reassigned to the 7 Special Operations Squadron, Rhein-Main AB, Germany. Returning from Germany, she held a number of positions with the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) in Washington, DC. She was then assigned to HQ, Military Airlift Command, Scott AFB, as chief of the Intelligence Briefing Division. Her final two years at Scott AFB were as the director of Intelligence Plans and Programs, Twenty-third Air Force. Major Lewis attended Squadron Officer School in 1976 and completed the Air Command and Staff College seminar program in 1983.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Part of our College mission is distribution of the students' problem solving products to DOD sponsors and other interested agencies to enhance insight into contemporary, defense related issues. While the College has accepted this product as meeting academic requirements for graduation, the views and opinions expressed or implied are solely those of the author and should not be construed as carrying official sanction.

"insights into tomorrow"

**REPORT NUMBER** 88-1580

**AUTHOR(S)** MAJOR ELLEN K. LEWIS USAF

**TITLE** A WORLD OF SECRETS: THE USES AND LIMITS OF INTELLIGENCE  
BY WALTER LAQUEUR--AN ANALYSIS

I. Purpose: To determine the value of A World of Secrets: The Uses and Limits of Intelligence, by Walter Laqueur, as professional reading for Air Force intelligence specialists.

II. Problem: An examination of Laqueur's book requires the following: a synopsis of A World of Secrets focusing on the development of the author's main conclusions, an investigation of the author's background and qualifications, a comparison of his analysis and assertions with the judgements of other contemporary writers on the subject, and the identification of criteria on which to base evaluation of Laqueur's book as useful professional reading.

III. Data: In A World of Secrets, author Walter Laqueur focuses on three issues relating to intelligence. They are as follows: how the policy process is affected by intelligence, the "why" of some notable intelligence failures, and the most promising possibilities for improvement in intelligence performance. His

## CONTINUED

carefully documented analysis of these issues leads him to conclude that intelligence plays a smaller role in the formulation of national policy than is generally thought. His treatment of intelligence failure case histories provides a review of the causes of these failures. Of particular interest is his examination of the factors to be considered for improving intelligence analysis. Mr. Laqueur's credentials as a scholar and writer are impeccable. Although he claims no expertise in intelligence, this contemporary historian and editor has written an extremely readable book on a subject he concedes is not easy. His extensive research is reflected in 47 pages of endnotes which in themselves constitute a comprehensive bibliography of the surprising volume of unclassified material available on the subject. In comparing Laqueur's thesis with the conclusions of other contemporary writers on the subject, one finds that his conclusions about the world of intelligence are not novel. They are shared, at least in part, by many others. However, there is clearly no consensus on the exact role that intelligence plays in the policy process, in the extent of intelligence failures and their causes, or on the best means for improving intelligence performance in the future.

IV. Conclusion: Laqueur's book expands the reader's understanding of intelligence in several ways. As a carefully researched and written book, it adds to one's knowledge about broad issues facing intelligence at the strategic level today. It also provides the reader with a universal set of questions which may be used to judge intelligence activity at any level.

V. Recommendation: A World of Secrets should remain on the Intelligence and War Core Reading List as the list is expanded and Air Force intelligence professionals should be encouraged to read it not only as a source of knowledge but as a guide for action.

## Chapter One

### SYNOPSIS OF A WORLD OF SECRETS: THE USES AND LIMITS OF INTELLIGENCE

#### INTRODUCTION

Ever since humans first began to collect information about the powers and intentions of neighboring clans and tribes, there have been intelligence agents and a craft--or science--of intelligence. And from the beginning of intelligence gathering and analysis, there has been criticism of its usefulness and effectiveness. The critics have usually had their own ideas of how to improve intelligence performance. (13:1)

In these opening sentences of A World of Secrets: The Uses and Limits of Intelligence, author Walter Laqueur establishes his agenda. His book is concerned with three issues relating to intelligence: "the impact of intelligence on policy, the causes of intelligence failures, and the prospects for improvement in intelligence gathering and analysis." (13:8)

#### Thesis

His examination of these issues leads him to conclude that while intelligence is an essential ingredient in the process of formulating national security policy, it plays a smaller role than generally believed, partly due to the difficult relationship between intelligence producers and consumers. Although intelligence organizations have frequently failed to predict events or correctly assess current situations, the record has not been without a positive side. Furthermore, intelligence performance can be improved by placing greater emphasis on the recruitment and training of intelligence analysts.

#### THE IMPACT OF INTELLIGENCE ON POLICY

For a long time, the principal question relating to policy and intelligence was how close a relationship between the two is appropriate and beneficial. (13:89) On one side of the argument, traditionalists argued that intelligence should play a neutral role in policy making, simply supplying the facts and then leav-

ing their interpretation to those responsible for policy. Only through this detachment from policy could the administrative and substantive integrity of intelligence be safeguarded. Others argued for a more active role for intelligence in the policy making process, helping to define what policies may be workable and advocating policy alternatives. (13:91) According to Laqueur, that debate seems to be over. "The dire warnings about the perils of close cooperation between intelligence chiefs and policy makers was not borne out by the record of the Eisenhower years." Then Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) Allen Dulles enjoyed considerable influence on policy through Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, his brother. If anything, those years illustrated the benefits of early and close cooperation between intelligence and policy makers. (13:79)

The real problem facing the intelligence-policy maker relationship lies in the barriers to effective communication between the two.

Among the most frequently cited causes for inadequate collaboration between policy makers and intelligence are (1) the cumbersome nature of bureaucratic organization [which fails to convey policy makers' requirements and priorities]; (2) demoralization and confusion caused by constant changes in administrative structure; (3) compartmentalization of knowledge due to the need for secrecy; (4) data overload, which makes it impossible for analysts and decision makers alike to distinguish between important 'signals' and mere 'noise'; (5) the impatience of decision makers with long-range, as opposed to crisis-generated, intelligence perspectives; (6) decision maker's tendencies in such situations to seize upon raw data, preempting the role of analyst for themselves; and (7) pressures, both externally and internally generated, to shape intelligence reports to conform and support policies already decided upon. (13:91)

Laqueur's examination of changing presidential attitudes toward intelligence and the differences in power and influence of successive DCIs illustrates the difficult relationship between policy makers and intelligence. The influence of intelligence has fluctuated over the past four decades and even in good times there are many obstacles to overcome. He concludes, "the function of intelligence is more modest than is generally believed." (13:338)

#### THE CAUSES OF INTELLIGENCE FAILURES

"The performance of US intelligence since World War II has

been uneven." (13:339) Laqueur bases that conclusion on an examination of the intelligence community's performance during those years: How well informed was intelligence? Was the available information interpreted correctly? How well were events predicted? (13:140) The record has been mixed. There have been both successes and failures. Laqueur's survey of intelligence performance over the past 40 years points out many correct appraisals as well as major errors. His careful analysis of the intelligence community's assessment of the Soviet missile program, i.e., the missile gap controversy of 1956-61, and the Cuban missile crisis illustrate that there are few unequivocal successes or failures.

The missile gap controversy refers to the debate, first within the intelligence community and eventually among the public, over the Soviet intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) development and deployment program. Two events in 1957 fueled the public controversy. In October, the Soviets launched Sputnik, the first artificial earth satellite. A month later, findings from the Gaither Committee Report, a classified study of Soviet strategic posture, were leaked. (13:146) The report had concluded that American strategic forces would soon (i.e., by late 1959) be vulnerable to attack by Soviet ICBMs. This prediction was based on the Soviet ICBM tests in August 1957 which "served as decisive evidence of a genuine technological breakthrough, then unmatched by the United States." (13:146) In the mind of Congress and the public, these Soviet technological achievements had taken us by surprise; such a surprise amounting to intelligence failure. In fact, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had predicted a Soviet satellite launch for three years prior to the event and had also anticipated the ICBM tests. (13:147) Arguments within the intelligence community over the progress of ICBM development, production, and deployment kept the controversy alive into the 1960s. In general, the estimates produced by the intelligence community were contradictory and inaccurate; the whole episode is counted as one of intelligence failure. Still, some of the estimates relating to Soviet strategic capability during the period were correct--illustrating that failure need not be complete.

Nor are successes always without some element of failure. Laqueur uses the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962 to illustrate this. Intelligence is generally considered to have performed well in this instance, having discovered and identified the Soviet offensive missiles in Cuba before the missiles were operational. Yet the Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) issued the previous month discounted the likelihood that the Soviets would introduce strategic weapons in Cuba. (13:161)

Laqueur offers some explanation why the record of the intelligence community is more often seen as one of failure than suc

cess. As Laqueur points out, "It is thought that to fail in intelligence is to fail utterly. To compound the problem, intelligence successes frequently remain unknown for a long time, whereas failures usually become known soon after they are recognized." (13:139) Furthermore, it is the failures, not the successes, which prompt post-mortems and investigations into their causes.

Laqueur assesses the opportunities for failure as unlimited; it may even be inevitable. (13:219) "Failure. . . means that there has been a mistake not just about the likelihood of a specific event (military attack) but in the general political orientation, the designs, behavior, ambitions, and strength of a certain country." (13:258) The result is surprise, a subject which has generated a considerable amount of scholarly effort. He notes that most interpretations attribute such failures to (1) the perceptions and misperceptions of intelligence analysts, (2) clumsy bureaucratic structures and their ambivalent relations with decision makers, and (3) the bias of decision makers. He finds these explanations incomplete, mostly because they do not address the substance of intelligence: information and its analysis. (13:269) Laqueur asserts that good intelligence depends on the people who produce it. He offers the example of British and American intelligence successes during World War II. No great methodological breakthrough was responsible. Instead, they depended on a large number of gifted people who knew a lot about their subjects or had superior intellectual ability. (13:277) Analysts possessed of experience, competence, imagination, and instinct are the keys. Laqueur admits that may not be a "startling or original" prescription. It is, however, "the only known way to minimize the risk of failure." (13:292)

### THE FUTURE OF INTELLIGENCE

Referring to an optimistic prediction of the Dulles-Jackson-Correa Committee in 1949 that the United States could have the "best intelligence service in the world," Laqueur finds that promise unfulfilled. His look at the future of intelligence is actually a catalog of the obstacles that must be overcome. (13:311) If the rest of Laqueur's book amounts to a "what's wrong?" with intelligence, then this last chapter, his look at the future, may be considered his views on "how to fix it."

#### Organization

"Intelligence has been subject to a bewildering zeal for reform. . . " over the years. (13:311) Very little of that reorganization brought about any substantial improvement in intelligence, and some of it has actually had a negative impact. More than anything, organizational change reflects the steady growth

of the intelligence bureaucracy. Yet the very nature of bureaucracy can stifle qualities like creativity and imagination which are essential in intelligence work. Laqueur suggests that if the large bureaucracies necessary to administer a huge intelligence apparatus are themselves a source of the problem, a reasonable solution may be fewer people working within smaller, less cumbersome organizations. (13:311-315)

### Technology

Technology affects both the collection and analysis of intelligence. What can be collected using ever more sophisticated technology is simply more than can be exploited. The quantity and seeming exactness of this technical collection have tended to make information available from other sources seem less important and reliable. However, it may well be this less valued information that is the most necessary for understanding the difficult problems of political intelligence. (13:315) Laqueur forecasts a growth in scientific and technical intelligence in the future, if only because the importance of technology to our national security and prosperity continues to grow. The best way to satisfy those requirements is to increase interaction between intelligence analysts, the private sector and academia. The duplication of effort that presently characterizes the intelligence community's scientific and technical activities is "not always undesirable," but should be carefully controlled. (13:315-316)

### Personnel

"Intelligence performance depends on those who perform it. . . ." (13:318) Computer technology and methodologies borrowed from the social sciences have been useful, but certainly did not produce the dramatic improvements initially claimed. Real possibility for improvement lies in greater attention to the recruitment and training of the practitioners of intelligence. The recent history of the intelligence community in the US with its scandals, accusations, and public discrediting of intelligence personnel only makes the task of recruiting well qualified personnel more difficult. (13:319-323) Once recruited, the intelligence community is not now able to provide the intensive and lengthy training required to assure the knowledge and experience required to achieve improved performance. (13:325)

### Secrecy and Democracy

"There is a contradiction between free societies and secret services." (13:326) Laqueur points out that no major power has ever done without an intelligence service, the risk to national security is too great. (13:325) Furthermore, intelligence services which cannot keep secrets are not effective. The problem

is to insure that secrecy serves the needs of effective foreign policy and does not provide a cloak for wrongdoing or incompetence. Oversight, from within and from outside intelligence organizations is difficult, but it is the only satisfactory solution yet advanced. (13:329-332, 335-338)

#### SUMMARY

The best summary of A World of Secrets is the one Laqueur provides in the concluding pages of his book. It capsulizes his conclusions about the past, present, and future of intelligence. (13:338-344)

1. "The function of intelligence is more modest than is generally believed."
2. "The performance of US intelligence since World War II has been uneven."
3. "To some extent intelligence. . . failures are inevitable." The main causes of these failures are intelligence and bias.
4. "There have been periodic attempts to improve intelligence performance; most of them have had no positive effect."
5. Improvements in the recruitment and training of intelligence personnel is the only realistic prospect for improvement.
6. Because of the negative features of bureaucracy, unless intelligence tries constantly to improve its performance, it is bound to deteriorate.
7. While the decisive international events in the last few decades have been political and economic in nature, the US intelligence effort is focused on strategic-military issues. Reorientation is overdue.
8. Covert actions are legitimate instruments of foreign policy but should be used only when genuinely necessary.
9. Intelligence must educate its consumers.
10. "Intelligence needs both secrecy and supervision."
11. "Intelligence is an essential service. . . but it is only one element of the decision-making process."

## Chapter Two

### A CRITIQUE OF A WORLD OF SECRETS

#### THE AUTHOR

Walter Laqueur is a contemporary historian and educator. The impressive list of his published works spans four decades. Its focus has been mainly on Europe and the Middle East; more recently he has written on the subject of terrorism. He has been associated, as founder and editor, with a number of respected publications: the Journal of Contemporary History, the Washington Papers, and the Washington Quarterly of Strategic and International Studies. As an educator, he has been associated with such institutions as Johns Hopkins, the University of Chicago, Harvard, Georgetown, and the Center for Strategic and International Studies. (21:1626) His credentials as writer and scholar are impeccable.

He claims no experience in intelligence and no special qualifications that make him an expert on the subject. He does suggest the disciplined and objective approach that an outsider can offer can make as valuable a contribution to our understanding of intelligence as the informed insights of an intelligence insider. (13:ix-x)

#### THE BOOK

A World of Secrets is an extremely readable book about a subject its author describes as "vexing and complicated." Laqueur is so even-handed in his treatment of the subject, he cannot be described as either a supporter or critic of intelligence. Gaddis Smith, reviewing the book for Foreign Affairs, called it a "calm, careful, and informed book. . . in refreshing contrast to much of the polemic, even hysteria, on the subject." (36:880)

Well informed it is. The extent of Laqueur's research is evident in the 47 pages of endnotes which accompany the text. He has drawn equally on the work of both critics of intelligence and its partisans. The thoroughness of the research effort is also evident in the numerous references to articles obtained from

Studies in Intelligence, an internal publication of the CIA. According to reviewer Harry Howe Ransom, "No other work on the subject represents such a wide coverage of sources." (35:986) The endnotes, which reflect an extensive search of the source material, may be read as a comprehensive bibliography of the surprising amount of unclassified material available on a subject where secrecy is fundamental. The endnotes may well be the highlight of the book for a reader who wishes to pursue the topic further.

In his introduction, Laqueur offers a clear statement of his purpose: to examine three issues surrounding intelligence. Two of the three, the intelligence-policy relationship and intelligence failures, occupy Laqueur's attention through most of the book. The third, "the prospects for improvement in intelligence gathering and analysis" unfortunately gets much less attention. Laqueur turns from the past and present to the future only in the last chapter where his general conclusion is that the prospects for the future are identical to the problems of the past and present. His focus on the future, chiefly dealing with intelligence analysis, is mainly prescriptive; how to improve intelligence performance.

While Laqueur's purpose is clearly stated and logically developed, his conclusions are not clear. "One finds no sustained theme or consistent argument." (35:987) This may be the greatest shortcoming of A World of Secrets. The reader is forced to dig for Laqueur's "bottom line." Thus the reader is left to formulate his or her own version of Laqueur's conclusion, wondering if it is the same as that to which Laqueur was striving.

## Chapter Three

### A COMPARISON OF LAQUEUR'S MAIN CONCLUSIONS WITH OTHER CONTEMPORARY WRITERS

#### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to compare Laqueur's main conclusions with the analysis of other contemporary writers. Specifically, it will explore the various points of view in recently published material relating to the role of intelligence in policy formulation, and the occurrences, causes, and suggested remedies of intelligence failures.

#### THE IMPACT OF INTELLIGENCE ON POLICY

Two aspects of Laqueur's examination of the impact of intelligence on policy will be compared with the analysis of other contemporary writers. First will be his assertion that intelligence, though an important element of the policy process, plays only a modest role. Second will be his discussion of the problems which affect the relationship between intelligence and policy makers. As part of Laqueur's discussion touched on the proper nature of that relationship, this subject will also be considered.

#### The Role of Intelligence

There is little doubt that others who attempt to understand the process by which policy decisions are reached agree that intelligence plays a part in the process. One need only sample the table of contents of recent books on the subject to find chapters with titles such as "Strategic Intelligence and the Foreign Policy Process." (19:Ch 4)

Like Laqueur, many who attempt to understand intelligence's role recognize that it is only one of many factors that influence the outcome of the foreign policy process. "For the policy maker. . . intelligence is but one ingredient in the making of a foreign policy decision. The intelligence report must compete with domestic pressures, including those from Congress and public opinion." (19:75) Once again, it is only necessary to consult

recent writings on the foreign policy process to understand that there are a whole cast of players on the foreign policy stage: the president and his staff, Congress, the bureaucracy, special interest groups, the media, and the public. (10:v-vi) Intelligence is just one input to the decision making process. (31:74)

Unlike Laqueur, however, others are less willing to offer any pronouncement about the degree of influence that intelligence has on the policy formulation process. Harry Howe Ransom, political scientist and a principal organizer of the Defense Studies Program, concludes that "Few measures have been developed for judging the weight of intelligence in the process. . . ." (19:73) In Intelligence: Policy and Process, which focuses on the intelligence-policy relationship, the authors concede, "Despite [its] significance, consensus has not yet emerged on the true nature of intelligence and its proper use to enhance the quality of the policy maker's actions in pursuit of the national interest." (17:353)

#### Objectivity versus Relevance

One area of consensus does emerge. The need to guard analysts' objectivity by separating them from intelligence consumers may have been flawed. (25:120) "What it did was to impose a splendid isolation upon intelligence that ensured its eventual policy irrelevance." (9:57) Intelligence analyses produced in determined ignorance of the policy alternatives actually being considered and implemented will only accidentally provide decision makers the information they need. Steve Chan has noted, "An intelligence system totally divorced from the thinking of the political leadership is neither practical or desirable.... In the absence of a referent system provided by those commitments, efforts to collect and analyze information will 'drift' aimlessly." (27:178) Guarding the intelligence professional's objectivity to the point that his or her judgments fail to inform policy makers of the things they need to know becomes self-defeating, (19:76) "an utter waste of time and taxes." (25:120) All of this would seem to bear out Laqueur's conclusion that the long debate over the traditional emphasis on separation of intelligence from the policy process versus greater integration appears to be over. (13:90)

Laqueur points out, however, that the old issue of separation versus integration is replaced by a new problem: how to maintain the proper balance, where to draw the line between intelligence producers and consumers to insure both objectivity and relevance? (13:89-90) Richard Betts writes, "Success depends on maintaining a delicate balance between discrediting analysts . . . or isolating them and keeping them pure but unhelpful." (25:121) Achieving this balance will never be easy. (19:76)

## The Relationship Between Policy and Intelligence

In examining "Intelligence and Its Customers," (13:Ch 3) Laqueur devotes considerable attention to the factors which complicate the relationship between policy makers and intelligence producers, describing them as barriers to communication. The factors he identifies are not new or startling, they are well known. (9:60) So, it seems, are the remedies. Policy makers must make their intelligence requirements known. They must keep intelligence producers informed of policy options under consideration and actions undertaken. (12:123) They must provide feedback on the usefulness of the intelligence product. (19:74-75; 5:205) Clearly, these are all actions which require the initiative of the policy maker. Laqueur suggests that intelligence educate its consumers. (13:343) But that also must take place at the behest of the intelligence consumer. (11:207) There is little that intelligence can do on its own to improve its relationship with the consumer and there is not much chance that consumers will change their behavior. (9:68; 12:123)

## INTELLIGENCE FAILURES

### The Record of Intelligence Performance

Laqueur's estimation of the "track record" of intelligence performance seems to be more optimistic than that of most observers. One writer states that Congress or the media have investigated as many as thirty alleged intelligence failures since 1960, many "involving issues and threats of major strategic, diplomatic, and economic importance to the United States." (28:162) William T. Lee focused on assessments of Soviet strategic weapons systems development and deployment and reached a nearly identical conclusion. "U.S. intelligence has underestimated Soviet weapons programs far more often than it has overestimated them; and the forecasting record since 1960-1961 seems worse than before." (33:54) Harry Howe Ransom extends the record of failure back to date of this country's central intelligence establishment. "The incidence of intelligence failure in significant foreign policy events since 1947 is high." (19:89)

### The Causes of Intelligence Failure

In explaining the causes of intelligence failures, Laqueur alludes to but does not address all the suggested causes, "partly because there are too many of them, and partly because some of the explanations are of little merit." (13:269) His own explanation of intelligence failures focuses on the shortcomings of individual analysts. He lists insufficient knowledge, general incompetence, deception, and bias as the causes of mistakes that lead to surprise and thus intelligence failure. (13:255)

In contrast, other writers who examine the causes of intelligence failure also look at the environment in which intelligence is produced and used. The many causes of intelligence failure which have been identified can be grouped into four categories: "perceptual bias, the nature of the intelligence estimating function, the attitudes and behavior of policy makers, and the organizational context within which the intelligence function takes place." (8:140)

**Bias.** Bias, according to Laqueur and others, is unavoidable to some degree. Confronted frequently with enormous amounts of raw information, analysts must have some "intellectual shortcuts" to help make sense of it. Richard Betts asserts that an analyst who has no preconceived ideas about what may be relevant or true "has probably not learned or thought very much." (25:126)

In Laqueur's estimation, the most frequent forms of bias are the Cassandra and Pollyanna syndromes. This refers to the tendency toward worst-case analysis or excessive optimism respectively. (13:284) Other writers point to cultural bias as the root of much analytical weakness. (34:12-13) Curiously, Laqueur discounts cultural bias as not being true bias at all, but rather "parochialism, and a deficiency of knowledge and imagination." (13:280) Nevertheless, mirror-imaging, a problem of analysis he discusses at some length, is identical to what others describe as cultural bias.

**Mirror-imaging.** Mirror-imaging is the term used to describe the assumption other people think and behave as we do and their governments generally share our values and political aims and will act accordingly. (13:340) Predictions about the actions of others are based upon what we would do in the same circumstances. This tendency has been cited repeatedly in case studies of intelligence failures: Pearl Harbor, the Cuban missile crisis, the Tet offensive in Vietnam, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and the 1973 Middle East war. (15:49) It has also been blamed for the underestimates of Soviet strategic weapons development in the 1950s and 1960s. (23:167; 36:70)

**Ignorance.** Few writers share Laqueur's conclusion that lack of knowledge is the most obvious reason for intelligence failure (13:281), although there is acknowledgement that problems of analysis often come from not having enough or the right information. (29:2) As Harry Howe Ransom puts it: "There are sometimes questions, particularly about the future intentions of others, which cannot be answered." (19:79)

**Deception.** Laqueur is not alone in noting that deception may play a part in the failures we attribute to intelligence. David Sullivan, a former strategic analyst with the CIA, asserts that estimates of Soviet strategic capabilities during the 1960s

and 1970s consistently misprized the likelihood of Soviet deception. (20:70) Roberta Wohlstetter, an historian widely recognized for her analysis of the successful Japanese surprise at Pearl Harbor, notes the victim of deception is frequently a victim of self-deception, holding on to "comforting assumptions" because discarding them means accepting a more threatening explanation of the facts. One of Wohlstetter's examples is the forecasting of Soviet strategic capability during the 1960s. Mirror-imaging was noted earlier as a factor in the underestimation of Soviet capabilities, but Wohlstetter believes that self-deception also played a role. (22:24-25) Merely the possibility of deception complicates the analytical task: it creates an environment where the validity of every piece of information is questioned. (7:246)

As noted earlier, Laqueur explains the causes of failure in terms of the individual intelligence analyst. However, intelligence does not exist in a vacuum. Those individuals work within intelligence organizations, there is a recognizable process which results in the intelligence product, and a consumer receives that intelligence product. Laqueur does not address these factors in discussing intelligence failures. However, many other contemporary writers do. As these other identified causes of failure contrast with Laqueur's narrower emphasis, they will be surveyed briefly.

The Coordination Process. Within the US intelligence community, intelligence estimates are the result of a coordinated effort involving the individual organizations that comprise the community. The final version of any National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) emerges from a series of committee meetings in which the varying viewpoints of each organization are merged through a process of compromise and modification into the final product. It is a useful bureaucratic tactic; "no one has to climb out on a limb" as the lone proponent of an unpopular or subsequently discredited judgement. (16:72) The danger is that it is possible for the coordination process to "filter out" accurate analysis. (24:571, 580) David Berkowitz, of the Brookings Institution, cites the example of "correct predictions that were coordinated out of the estimate" of Soviet missile deployments in the 1950s. (24:585) Daniel Graham, a former director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, agrees that accurate analysis can be lost in the coordination process.

I have seen, and taken part in, countless inter-agency sessions on estimates in which perceptive insights and relevant data have been shunted aside...or watered down because they would not fit with some agency's position, or because they stood to block inter-agency consensus on a particular point. (6:25)

Consensus, as a method of reconciling differing analytical viewpoints, can also result in ambiguity. (32:72) Estimates are so filled with qualifiers and possibilities rather than probabilities that they can reasonably be used to support any number of differing policy choices.

Bureaucracy. There is also the problem of the negative influences that large, bureaucratic intelligence organizations may have on the intelligence product. Organizational theory defines certain formal and informal systems of interaction within organizations that affect its basic function. Intelligence organizations, being large government bureaucracies, are not exempt from these kinds of organizational behavior, to the potential detriment of the intelligence product. For example, specialization within large organizations is normal. Unfortunately, it can lead to narrow loyalties that get in the way of sharing information and thus handicapping analysis. (28:173; 8:140-141)

Policy Makers. The final category of causes cited for intelligence failures consists of the attitudes and behavior of policy makers, the principal consumers of intelligence estimates. "When an unpleasant surprise hits a policy maker in the face, it is natural for that policy maker to feel that intelligence has let him down" (25:127) Part of the problem may be the policy maker's unrealistic expectations of what intelligence can do. (1:248; 12:122) It is a frequent complaint that policy makers prefer to act as their own analysts. (32:72) This tendency has been called "the most central problem of intelligence." (19:76) It is also true that intelligence consumers have seldom defined their needs so that intelligence producers are left to guess about requirements, providing what they think policy makers may need. (1:252) Yet there is "no element more important to good intelligence support for the policy process than a clear set of priorities." (26:67)

#### THE PROSPECTS FOR IMPROVEMENT

What needs to be fixed depends upon one's perception of what is broken. Recommendations for improving intelligence performance generally reflect their proponents' understanding of what causes intelligence failures. Laqueur, not surprisingly, advocates improvements in the recruitment and training of analysts as the most promising method for improving intelligence performance. He is not alone in this belief. (4:191) Even those who propose major organizational changes also recommend greater attention to the recruitment and training of analysts. (19:91; 28:174) There are additional proposals for improving intelligence analysis, also aimed directly at improving the analytical product. These will be reviewed briefly.

## Recruitment

Besides basic area knowledge and language skills, Laqueur maintains that those joining intelligence agencies should have a firm intellectual grounding in the social sciences, especially history and geography. (13:318) Harvard history professor Richard Pipes, who participated in the A Team/B Team evaluation of intelligence performance, is in strong agreement with Laqueur on this point, as is Richard Betts. (2:178) On the other hand, Richard Latimer, of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence staff and a former CIA analyst, questions their preference for this particular academic background. He points out that a significant number of CIA analysts, whose performance was sharply criticized by Professor Pipes and the B Team, came from remarkably similar academic backgrounds: advanced degrees in history and political science from "East Coast colleges or at colleges where their professors were from East Coast colleges." (14:182)

Shared misgivings about the consequences of drawing analysts from too homogeneous a background undoubtedly motivate those who suggest broadening the base from which analysts are recruited. (34:41) The universities will continue as an important source. In addition, "the public at large through advertisements, the personnel job search agencies, the military and other career services, and the professional and commercial worlds" should be considered in the search for likely candidates. (34:12; 3:165)

As another way of improving the recruitment process, former CIA director William Colby suggests implementing the kind of record keeping that will permit subsequent analysis of the process itself. Follow-up on all applicants (including those not hired) can be used to determine how effective the recruitment and screening process was in attracting applicants with appropriate basic qualifications and identifying potential analytic talent. (3:166)

## Training

The kinds of training improvements most often recommended will reinforce and broaden the basic area and language skills referred to above and systematically develop and expand analysts' experience. It is a frequent criticism that analysts spend very little time in their country or region of specialty. Few are assigned outside of the country. Infrequent travel or temporary assignment to an analyst's area of interest is usually only for brief periods. (28:166) Rotational assignments in the "field" as a routine practice are the often proposed solution.

The analyst of a geographic area must have a chance to visit his area of concern, to serve there for an extended period of some months to absorb its intangibles, and to make return visits periodically over the years. The oil flow analysts must visit petroleum production and transportation facilities. (3:168)

Ideally over a period of time, an individual analyst's knowledge and experience will grow. However, there are methods, which by transferring some of the corporate experience of the organization to the individual, can speed this process. One of these is the use of case studies. Richard Pipes suggests developing a series of case studies of significant Soviet political and foreign policy decisions. With thorough study of such case studies, a Soviet analyst can acquire an intuitive understanding of why the Soviets acted as they did. (18:176)

A variation of this method is the practice of retrospective analysis or historical analysis. It involves going back over past events to identify the early evidence or indicators of subsequent actions. (23:169) This, of course, is precisely what occurs in the "post-mortem" of alleged intelligence failures, but it need not be confined to only those cases. There are significant biases which can affect such analyses--the perfect vision of hindsight, for instance--in explaining single events after the fact. (27:176) Nevertheless, their systematic use can help test and sharpen the analyst's basic set of assumptions about what is likely to be significant or relevant. (29:9)

### CONCLUSION

As the preceding chapter illustrates, Laqueur's conclusions about the world of intelligence are not novel. They are shared, at least in part, by a large number of other observers who are currently writing on the subject of intelligence. Clearly, there is no consensus on the exact role intelligence plays in the policy process, the true extent of intelligence failures and their causes, or on the best means of achieving improved intelligence performance in the future. Laqueur does not ignore this broad range of differing assessment and conclusion completely. However, comparison of his key ideas with those of other contemporary writers makes it clear that the judgements and conclusions drawn are Laqueur's and not necessarily "the facts."

## Chapter Four

### AN EVALUATION OF A WORLD OF SECRETS AS PROFESSIONAL READING

#### INTRODUCTION

Why should Air Force intelligence professionals read A World of Secrets? Does it merit inclusion on the Air Force Intelligence and War Core Reading List? This chapter will answer those questions. First, some criteria will be identified against which the value of Laqueur's work as a book about intelligence can be measured, and second, it will be tested against the objectives of the Intelligence and War Program.

#### SOME CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

In a review essay of a group of books about intelligence, Roger Hilsman suggests the appropriate basis for evaluation is whether a book adds to our knowledge about intelligence. For Mr. Hilsman's purpose intelligence is defined as having five aspects: first, factual information; second, intelligence as knowledge, i.e., information that has been interpreted and evaluated and is forwarded as judgement or prediction; third, covert action; fourth, intelligence organizations; and fifth, the ethical question of "the role of a secret intelligence service in a free society." (30:131) If through "research, systematic thought, or memoir," a book can improve our understanding of intelligence in any of Hilsman's categories, it will be worthwhile.

Laqueur succeeds in telling us something about intelligence in each of these five aspects. His focus on the intelligence-policy relationship and the causes of intelligence failures have contributed much to our understanding of intelligence organizations and intelligence as knowledge. As Laqueur explores the barriers which exist between policy makers and intelligence producers, the reader gains a broader understanding of the real degree to which intelligence can effectively participate in the policy making process and the perpetual demands of balancing the competing ideals of analytical objectivity and relevance. A discussion of intelligence failures and their causes illustrates the processes which transform information into the intelligence

product as well as where and how they may break down. All five aspects of intelligence which Hilsman identifies are intertwined; one impinges on the other, that one on the next. Consequently, the reader concludes A World of Secrets having learned something about intelligence in each of its aspects even though Laqueur has necessarily limited his focus.

### INTELLIGENCE AND WAR

The Intelligence and War Core Reading List was prepared as one of several initiatives intended to acquaint intelligence professionals in the Air Force with the role intelligence has played in both combat and the formulation of national strategy. (37:1) The selected works are also intended to provide a point of departure (and perhaps the inspiration) for further reading and study. In attempting to clarify the role of intelligence in the policy process and the extent to which intelligence has or has not performed well in the past, Laqueur's book accomplishes the program's goal. (37:2) The extensive endnotes which Laqueur has included can be culled for further sources on nearly any topic relating to intelligence the reader wishes to pursue.

### A LAST THOUGHT

The questions Laqueur attempts to answer about intelligence are fundamental: What is intelligence's proper function? What can we realistically expect of intelligence? How well is it performing and why? These questions need not be confined to strategic intelligence as an ingredient of national policy; they are appropriate at every level of intelligence activity. Air Force intelligence professionals should be encouraged by Laqueur's inquiry to ask themselves the same questions. If they do that, Laqueur's book is worthwhile not only as a source of knowledge but as a guide for action--the true role of intelligence.

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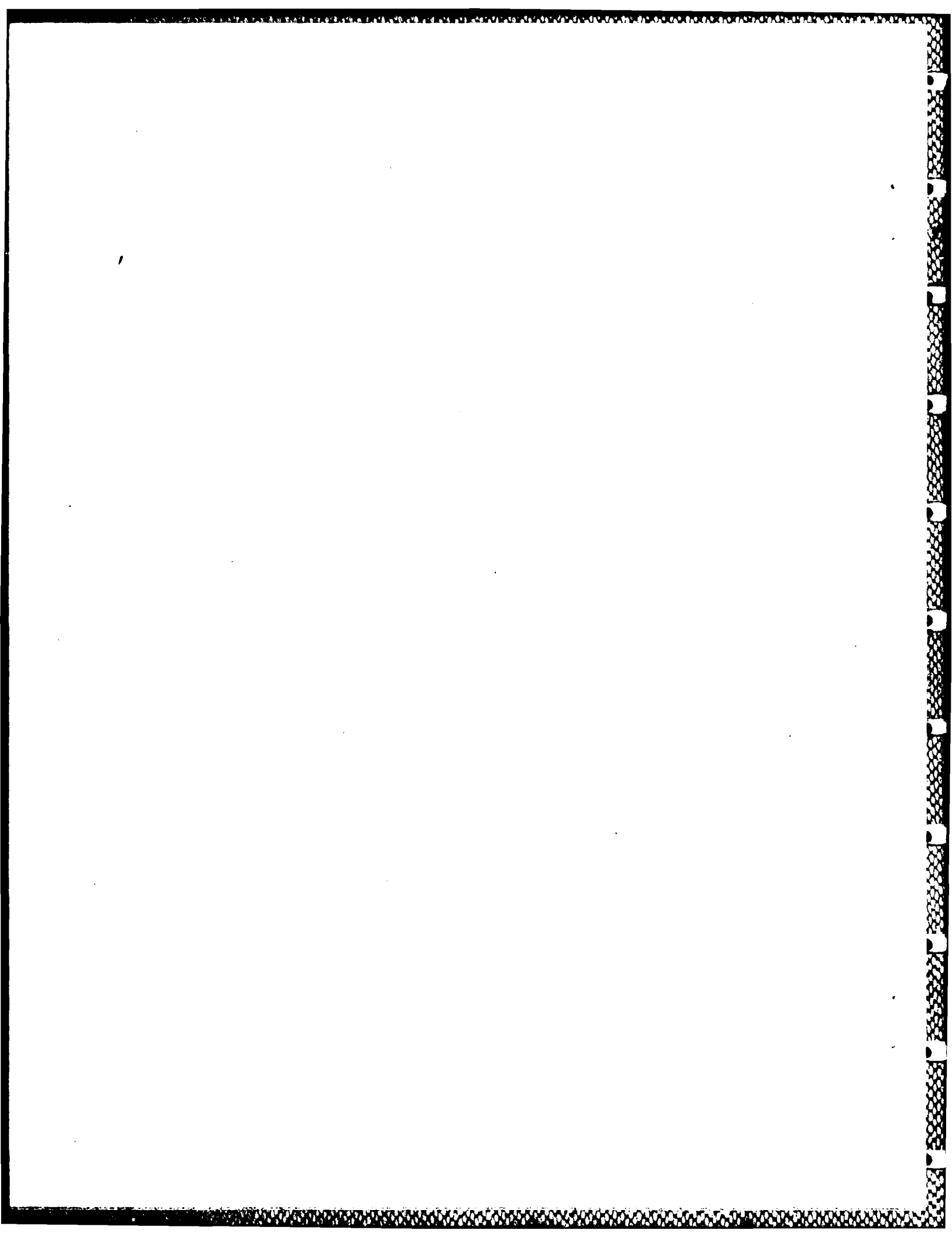
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